

Pseudopanax laetus

SYNONYMS

Panax arboreus var. *laetus* Kirk, *Nothopanax laetus* (Kirk) Cheeseman, *Neopanax laetus* (Kirk) Philipson

FAMILY

Araliaceae

AUTHORITY

Pseudopanax laetus (Kirk) Allan

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Dicotyledonous Trees & Shrubs

NVS CODE

PSELAE

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 48

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2018 | At Risk – Declining

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: RF

2004 | Gradual Decline

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

bushy shrub with large hand-shaped leaves on red stalks

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic to the northern part of the North Island from Coromandel to inland Gisborne and Taranaki.

HABITAT

Montane forest.

FEATURES

Small multi-branched tree to 5 m tall, branchlets brittle. Leaves alternate, leaflets 5-7, palmate, on short petiolules. Petiole to 25 cm long, sheathing branchlet at base, stipules present, purplish red. Petiolules stout, purplish red or leaflets subsessile. Leaflets obovate- to cuneate-oblong, thick and coriaceous, green above, paler below, margin coarsely dentate-serrate in distal half, acute or acuminate to subacute; midveins and main lateral veins obvious above and below; terminal lamina 12-25 x 5-10 cm or more, lateral leaflets smaller. Inflorescence a terminal, compound umbel, flowers sometimes subracemose on secondary rays; primary rays (branchlets) 10-15; 15-20 secondary rays. Calyx truncate or obscurely 5-toothed; petals ovate-oblong, acute. Ovary 2-loculed, each containing 1 ovules; style branches 2, spreading. Fruit fleshy, purple, c. 5 mm diam., laterally compressed, style branches retained on an apical disc. 2 Seeds per fruit, broadly-ovate or oblong, wrinkled, 3.4-4.7(-5.1) mm long.



Close up, *Pseudopanax laetus* mature foliage, Upper Kaueranga Valley. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



Pseudopanax laetus close up of inflorescence with flowers during male phase, Ex Cult. Puhoi. Photographer: Peter de Lange

SIMILAR TAXA

The dark red petioles and large leaflets of this species are distinctive

FLOWERING

(August)-September to November

FRUITING

October to February

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Very easy from fresh seed. Can be grown from semi-hardwood cuttings. Very fast growing and tolerant of a wide range of soil types and moisture regimes but dislikes very dry soils. Best in damp soils.

THREATS

This species is highly palatable to browsing animals. Subsequently it is usually only found in cliff refugia or other similar sites inaccessible to browsing animals. Possums seriously damage plants and have been responsible for its near extinction in some parts.

ETYMOLOGY

pseudopanax: False cure

laetus: From the Latin laetus 'bright'

WHERE TO BUY

Common in cultivation and sold by most plant nurseries.

NOTES ON TAXONOMY

This species was transferred back to *Neopanax* Allan by: Frodin, D.G.; Govaerts, R. 2003: World Checklist and Bibliography of Araliaceae, The Cromwell Press, European Union.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Allan (1961), Eagle (2006), Webb and Simpson (2001).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H.H. 1961. Flora of NZ, Vol. I. Government Printer, Wellington, Eagle, A. 2000.

Eagle, A. 2006. Eagle's complete trees and shrubs of NZ. Te Papa Press, Wellington

Webb, C.J. & Simpson, M.J.A. 2001. Seeds of NZ gymnosperms and dicotyledons. Manuka Press, Christchurch.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pseudopanax-laetus/>